

Tape #80**Interview with Lee Colman Sandefer and James Bounds****Date: 8/31/08****Interview conducted by Chuck Dunkerly****Transcribed by Josh Karpel****Checked by****Tape #N80****01:34****CD:** Could you put some adjectives to your experience that day?

LS: Like terrible? Like the worst day of my life. We kept this to our family for years. There was very little talk about that particular day. But because of these images coming forth in the later years, I pursued the avenue of gathering information, and I got a lot of information from the Pearl Harbor Survivors. That day was, I consider myself fortunate because of my age, because I can put it behind me and get on with my life, even though it was probably the worst day of my life. My brother, who was 5 years older than I, age 8, suffered psychological impact from this, and he today wanders in the desert. He has never been a stable person. The impact on a family unit is devastating because, you know, things happen as you go through life, and you wonder why does this person have this attitude or personality that's different than other people's. And so I would go so far as to say that, because of that day, the entire family unit suffered from that tragedy, psychologically. I know that my father had difficulty with it because, sometimes when you were in charge and such a devastating event happens and you have no control, it haunts you for your life, when you can't do anything. My mother became very, very stern individual, and controlling individual because she had to take charge. There was an event, my brother tells me, that when we were at the house, and my mother saw that they were going in the house and taking our possessions to use to clean up, that she actually grabbed the broom and stood at the doorway to protect her home. In other words, she lost it psychologically. But she was still able to go down to Water's Front and help them come ashore. I don't know how many adjectives you want.

04:39**CD:** That was great. What about the women?

LS: As I pieced these stories together, I have to admire the women that were on Ford Island, and I'm sure that the women in other locations did the same thing. And that was the women taking charge. Now these are local housewives, these are not trained nurses, they're not military personnel, they're just local housewives taking charge of the situation and administering first aid the best that they knew how. And that was at the OBOQ, when they removed their slips, cut them into bandages, and treated the wounded. The other courses, as I described, the women going down to the water's edge and helping those who had been swimming through burning oil come ashore. And there's another piece of information which is kind of humorous and interesting. The trench that I

described up by the USS Utah, sailors were in the bottom of the trench, and one sailor tells me that he looked up and he saw a woman at the top of the trench offering coffee and sandwiches. Now I don't know when this was, whether it was during, in between, or after, but he says, 'I could not believe it.' They were prepared to serve coffee and sandwiches

Pause for sound

06:40

CD: So, from the sailors in the trench.

LS: Public works had dug a trench over where the aircraft carriers normally tied up, but at this particular day, the USS Utah was tied up next to that. The sailors that abandoned ship from the Utah went to this trench, and they were laying at the bottom of the trench. One sailor looks up and he sees this woman offering coffee and sandwiches. Now I do not know whether this was during the attack, in between the attacks, or after the attack, but I find that most amazing.

07:26

CD: What's the lesson to be gleaned from Pearl Harbor? What should we take away from that? That day?

LS: The lessons from Pearl Harbor is that, it blends in with the Pearl Harbor motto, and that is to remember Pearl Harbor and keep America alert. It is an unfortunate situation that we have enemies throughout the world, and some we know, and some we don't know, that we must always be prepared to defend our country at the utmost. The other thing that I take away is that there is a thing called forgiveness. Even though the Armies, the Japanese Naval force were operating under orders from the Empire of Japan, that generation were doing what they thought was the right thing. Today's generation is different, and therefore you must forgive and get on.

08:51

CD: Is there anything about your experience that I haven't covered?

LS: I think you got it all.

CD: Lee, than you so much for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

BROLL

SWITCH TO JAMES BOUNDS

12:32

CD: James, if we could start, if you could introduce yourself and tell us where you come from originally?

JB: I grew up in a little place, Bounds community in Bounds, Mississippi. And I

went to school, high school, at a place called Big Creek. There's about 450 kids there in a consolidated high school. And I was up there and I joined the Navy in August of 1940. I turned 18 in July and I joined the Navy in August. I wasn't really anxious to get out of the place.

CD: Hold on. Let me ask you the question because I stepped on it there.

JB: Okay.

13:15

CD: Why did you want to join the Navy?

JB: Well, I didn't want to, I didn't see no future there where I was, after getting out of school. There was no jobs or anything at that time, that was in the 30's, and so I wanted to try the military.

CD: Could you tell us the story of when you enlisted, how old you were, what the date was?

JB: I enlisted in the Navy August the 7th, 1940, and I was 18. I turned 18 in July the 26th and I joined August the 7th, 1940.

CD: When you went into your basic training for the Navy, what did they train you as, and what were you trained for?

JB: At that time I just trained in just regular military. I went through, I had 2 months training, and at the end of it I didn't take my boot leave. At the end, instead of taking my leave, I went to the USS Oklahoma.

14:41

CD: When did you...James, if you could uncross your feet, I'm sorry...Tell us of how you got aboard the Oklahoma. How'd that happen?

JB: I, after getting out of training, I did a week as a funeral detail at Point Loma. Then I went from San Diego to Long Beach on a destroyer. I think it was the Sumner, I'm not sure, the 385 or something. Anyway, I met the ship in Long Beach, California.

CD: What was your job aboard ship?

JB: When I reported aboard, they were short in the navigation department, so they asked me would I like to become a quartermaster. Well, at that time I wasn't sure what a quartermaster was, so I said yes, and found out they were quartermasters and it was the navigation department, had about 16 people in the department. So I was real happy to be assigned to that. I stayed out of the deck force.

16:16

CD: What was your rank and rating?

JB: My rank, I started out as a seaman 2nd, and then seaman 1st, and I made 3rd class, 2nd class, 1st class, and then I made chief quartermaster. I made chief in May of 1944, then from there, the Korean War in 1951, in April I made Warrant, W-1 and W-2 and W-3, then I made full lieutenant in '60. And I retired in 1 July, 1967.

CD: Long career, but we're not gonna get into that.

JB: Yet.

CD: Could you tell us the story of how the ship went, how the ship got stationed to Hawaii?

JB: Well, in 1941 I think, the President decided to change all the battleships, send them to Hawaii. And our Admiral, Richardson at that time, he wasn't happy with that. So they relieved him, and they got Admiral Kimmel, they dropped about 30 numbers to pick him up as Admiral cause he agreed with it. And that's how the ships got shipped to Hawaii. All the battleships went out there, then in about 9 months, 3 of them left and went to the east coast, Idaho, Mississippi, and New Mexico.

18:08

CD: Can you tell me what Hawaii was like when you first pulled in? How long you were there, when you got there?

JB: Well, it was a lot different. They met us there with all the Hula girls and this kind of stuff to start with. But after a fashion, they weren't all that friendly, civilians wasn't that friendly to us. So, then when we did go to town, we rode this old train, you know, by the time we go to town we had black smoke all over our white uniforms.

CD: Sorry, James, I have to stop you.

Pause

18:58

CD: So tell me, how did you find Hawaii, what did you think of it when you were there?

JB: Well, I liked it to start with, because what I did, when I got off the ship, I'd got to the YMCA, get me a bathing suite and go down to the beach. It only cost a dollar, you know. You could go out there and swim, and that was my big thing then, on the beach. I'd spend the day there, most of the days that I went back, I was back by sunset most of the time.

CD: What was...walk me through a typical day onboard ship, aboard a

battleship.

JB: Onboard the battleship? Well, reveille was about 5:30 in the morning. And my department, navigation department, we stood mostly watches, all types of watches, and we took care of the charts, publications, and everything for the navigator, the sextants, the times, the clocks, and all. That was our duty, to assist him in the navigation of the ship. So when I went aboard, they started me out one on one in the chart house up there about 3 nights a week. So now I'm glad that I got that indoctrination, because it seemed like I was ahead of quite a few people by doing that. But it was correcting charts and the whole business. And learning how to stand a watch, and you had to put certain entries in the log, and they had to be in there the right way, the proper way.

20:52

CD: Were you aware that the Japanese had, that Japan had it in for the United States or were planning anything?

JB: Well, I knew that they had discussions and meetings, but the only thing we were looking for was sabotage or something. That was our main stuff in a dark ship, looking for submarines. No one at any time ever talked about planes, air raids, because the channel was too shallow. It was 40 feet deep, and that's what it dredged to. And our torpedoes, it took almost 100 feet to drop them and charge them before they exploded. And they just didn't consider, no one considered an aircraft bombing, I don't care what they say. They didn't consider it.

22:09

CD: Could you please take a drink of water and clear your throat? Very good, thank you.

JB: I hope that's better.

CD: It is.

JB: Ever since I had polyps removed out of my nose, my voice is not as strong as it used to be.

CD: If you feel yourself not having as strong a voice, you can just pause and take a drink of water. I don't need to prompt you to do that...Do you remember what you were doing on December 6th?

JB: December the 6th? Yes. I went over, on the 6th I went over to Waikiki beach around noon time and I came back by the Marine canteen and had a couple of Pepsi Colas. Then I came back to the ship, I was back to the ship by 6 o'clock that evening. Because I was asked to. We had a material inspection on Monday, so I was asked to come back and help straighten out the after steering station. And so I came back early, and that's what I was gonna do Sunday morning.

Pause for sound
END OF TAPE